



Importance of Public Relations Video Transcript

Length 3 minutes, 31 seconds

Narrator: In the developing a comprehensive truancy reduction strategy, it is critical to build on the community's strengths: its service organizations, social support agencies, businesses, parents, youth and faith organizations. An important first step is to create a community education program that makes members of the community, stakeholders, and policy makers aware of the impact and consequences of truancy and the need to intervene with truant youth at a very early stage.

In Suffolk County New York, the probation department and schools sponsored a poster contest to highlight the truancy issue. 400 students participated by creating posters, which featured importance of attending school.

[shows pictures of posters]

Probation officials solicited funds from a local bank to have the winning pictures professionally printed and local businesses were asked to display the posters in their windows. The local media provided extensive coverage of the contest, increasing the spotlight on the truancy problem.

[Interview with Vince Iaria, Director of Probation, Suffolk County New York]

As far as community awareness end of it, we then, the winning poster, received a \$500 award from the bank. That was put out in community shops to make community business aware that they shouldn't be serving children during the schools hours, that this needs to be reported, kids can't be walking around, this is a school that requires children to be there, its not an open campus, and we find that this approach works well to perfecting truancy.

Narrator: Jacksonville United Against Truancy was formed in 2000 by community leaders to coordinate the city's efforts to reduce truancy. In its first year the initiative developed a public outreach campaign to inform students, parents and the community at large about the serious consequences of excessive absenteeism from school. These public awareness activities have since expanded and include an annual Truancy Awareness Month, during which a variety of community events were held and public service announcements were broadcast on local television. The audience messages: parental responsibility for school attendance and what happens when teenagers skip school.

["Parent Excuses" Public Service Announcement from Jacksonville United Against Truancy]

[PSA Narrator:] There are some parents who make excuses for truancy

[PSA man in jail:] "I was too busy taking care of the other kids, it was raining cats and dogs, my alarm didn't go off, I needed a babysitter, he didn't wash his clothes last night like I told him to, now I can't take my child to school, because I'm in jail."

[PSA Narrator:] There is no excuse for not sending your child to school

[Interview with Shelley Grant Interview, Case Manager, Truancy Arbitration Program]

The value of the public awareness campaign, is that at least once a year it brings truancy to the

forefront and makes the community realize the importance of focusing on appropriate school attendance and regular school attendance for our children.

[Interview with Eugene Heath Interview- Program Admin, Southside/Northside Truancy Center]
We have schools, after church schools, where we didn't have them before, providing services for children and their families in Duvall County. We also work with the business community because we know that when we often call and say "hey, we've got your son or daughter here," then you have got to leave work. And we've talked to some of the employers, and some of the employers are aware. We use Jacksonville United Against Truancy to get that message out. We do public television, we do faith-based community programs, we're at community meetings late at night and early in the morning. That's what we do.

[END]



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